



Plough Inn Maple

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The Plough Inn Maple

Madison

A fascinating history of the early days of Wisconsin could consist only of tales about taverns. Often the first residences in an area, these sometimes rough and ready hostelries sprang up along the military, territorial and plank roads, especially on stagecoach routes. They supplied food and drink, entertainment, warmth and society, and, if not a bed, some floor space and a buffalo robe to the haulers, teamsters, stage coach passengers, foot travelers, wagoners and horse back riders who thronged those early thoroughfares. The Old Plough Inn on Wiota Road was such a place.

Now an ecologically friendly bed and breakfast called Arbor House, it still stands at 3402 Monroe Street in Madison. It is marked with a plaque, put up in 1973 by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), stating that the Plough Inn and stage coach

stop is one of the oldest existing houses in Madison, built in 1853 on a tract of land entered in the U.S. Land Office in 1836.

Until 1981 when a fierce windstorm demolished it beyond repair, one of the oldest maple trees in Wisconsin looked over the structure. It was there long before the land was platted or passing travelers needed a spot to rest and refresh themselves.

A stonecutter named Paunack built the home/inn of brick and native sandstone from a nearby quarry, and its 18-inch walls, hand-hewn beams and wide plank maple floors attest to its strong construction.

John Whare, a short, heavy Englishman with a quick temper, bought the place in 1858 and turned it into a tavern. He also sold plows (being an Englishman, he spelled it "plough"), hence the earlier name. On the lower floor he served soup and beer to miners from Mineral Point and wagoners hauling loads of ore. Dancers could whirl and stomp on the upper floor. Always ready for a fight himself, Whare was well able to handle any rowdiness that might occur

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under his roof. Apparently there was considerable, much to the detriment of the furnishings.

Harry Ellsworth Cole, in his book *Stage Coach and Tavern Tales of the Old Northwest*, wrote that Whare was as testy with his family as he was with his unruly guests. One day at dinner, when his son angered him, he knocked the boy clean across the room. Recovering quickly, the son dumped a steaming bowl of gravy over his parent's head and sprinted for the woods handily surrounding the tavern, as his Pa grabbed for the shotgun. How long the youth hid out is unknown.

Another tale passed along from guest to guest, probably in front of a flickering fire, on a dark and stormy night, claimed that the body of a man killed in a drunken brawl at the Plough Inn lay buried a short distance away. There are similar tales about other taverns, and maybe they are all true. In those days, neither accommodations nor patrons were always elegant, and frontiersmen often made their own laws.

Source: Lorraine Wilke, Madison